



# Norwood Public School

## Questions and Answers Regarding the District's Financial Situation

Dear Parents/Guardians,

On November 9, 2009, I sent home a letter to all parents/guardians with information concerning the difficult financial situation the district is currently experiencing and subsequently posted that letter to the district's website on December 4, 2009. Many questions and rumors surfaced because of this news. We have developed the following "Question and Answer" format to respond to questions from parents, community members, and the PTO; to keep everyone informed; and to disseminate information as efficiently as possible.

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**1. Your letter stated that we had to reduce this year's operating budget by \$165,000. Who is to blame for this error?**

The two major reasons for the shortfall this year were increases in insurance costs and increased special education tuitions. While the district budgeted for reasonable costs in these areas, increases that arose, after the budget was developed, were much larger than anticipated.

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**2. When will an itemized list of programs/activities that were cut be published?**

A general list was included in the original letter. Here are further specifics:

- ½ day/week of clerk time for principal's office and nurse
- 2 days/week of secretarial assistance for Child Study Team
- 2 hours/day of lunch supervision
- 2 ½ days/week of custodial service
- elimination of detentions during lunch/recess
- some reduction in curriculum coordination time
- elimination of clubs, intramural, and inter-scholastic sports (with the hope that some of these may be provided with help from the PTO)
- elimination of standardized testing in grades 1 and 2
- eliminating board payment of transportation costs for most field trips

In addition, we plan to increase revenues through additional grant funds and rental fees.

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**3. How and why were these particular cuts selected?**

As stated in the letter of 9 November, we chose these areas because we are committed to maintaining the integrity of our high quality instructional programs; to keeping our current class sizes; and to continuing our excellent programs in the visual and performing arts. We deemed the reductions, listed in question 2, to have the smallest potential impact on the academic success of our students.

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**4. Why in the world would a school cut a program that encourages young children to read books? Did the 1 cent eraser that they were awarded break the budget?**

All teachers consistently encourage students to read books. This is certainly not reserved for any specific club. I am sure that parents also encourage reading at home. While the cost of the eraser did not break the budget, the cost of our extracurricular activities did exceed \$45,000.

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**5. What explanation was given to the children relative to the cuts?**

The explanation varied somewhat according to the age of the students but we told them the truth - the reductions were necessary because of money problems.

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**6. When will the November 9 letter from Dr. Feifer be posted on the web site?**

We posted the letter on December 4, 2009.

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**7. Does the Board plan to spend to cap in 2010-2011?**

Budget planning for 2010-2011 is just beginning. We do not yet know what our spending CAP will be so it is impossible to answer this question now.

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**8. Why can't clubs meet from 3:00-3:30 since teachers are required to be at work during this time?**

Teachers are required to be in the building until 4:30 on Mondays for faculty meetings, learning communities, and other district or grade-level meetings; until 3:30 on Tuesdays through Thursdays to give extra help to students as necessary; and until 3:10 on Fridays or days before holidays. The district cannot unilaterally assign additional curricular or extracurricular duties during these times.

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**9. What hours are teachers required to be in the building?**

See question 8 for the afternoon schedule. Teachers are required to arrive by 8:15 a.m.

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**10. Do teachers have pre-defined activities during preps, before school, and after school?**

Yes, during preps and after school. Teachers are due in by 8:15 a.m., five minutes before the start of the instructional day. Teachers use prep periods during the school day for lesson plan development and modification. See question 8 for an explanation of our after-school schedule and responsibilities.

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**11. If teachers are required to be available until 3:30 anyway, why can't some of the activities just meet for a shorter amount of time?**

See question 8. Please note that staff members very often work beyond their contracted time.

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**12. Why can't parent volunteers run these programs in place of teachers?**

While volunteers provide wonderful support to the school, they are not permitted to run programs alone with children during the school day. There is an opportunity for some volunteerism after school, depending on the degree of liability associated with a specific activity. We can discuss this with the PTO.

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**13. Is there any way to raise the amount of money kept in surplus?**

The State regulates the amount of money we can maintain in surplus for unforeseen circumstances. We are currently below the State maximum of \$250,000 for a district our size.

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**14. Is it possible to set up an emergency fund?**

Due to recent changes in State regulations, it is now possible to set up an emergency reserve. However, funds must be available to accomplish this, either at the end of a school year, or during the budget process.

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I hope these answers are helpful. Please feel free to call (201-768-6363 ext. 226) or e-mail me ([feiferj@nvnet.org](mailto:feiferj@nvnet.org)) if you have any additional questions. I will continue to add to this list as more questions come in.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Feifer